

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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SUBJECT: ASU AND PRESS REORGANIZATION

SUMMARY.PRESIDENT SADAT IS TO PREPARE NEW STATUTE FOR ARAB SOCIALIST UNION BEFORE JULY 23. STATUTE WILL SUPPOSEDLY ENSURE THAT THIS "ALLIANCE OF WORKING FORCES" PROVIDES FORUM FOR ALL POINTS OF VIEW. LATER IN YEAR, THERE WILL BE ELECTIONS FOR ALL ASU OFFICES INCLUDING HIGHER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. NEW PRESS COUNCIL WILL BE FORMED TO FACILITATE PRESS SELF-CENSORSHIP. COMMENT: LIBERALS ARE DISAPPOINTED,THOUGH NOT SURPRISED. PRESS COUNCIL SEEMS UNNECESSARY TO THEM, AND MANY WANT POLITICAL PARTIES, NOT A MORE LIBERAL ASU. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING MONTHS OF PEOPLES ASSEMBLY HEARINGS, GOE CONSULTATIONS, HIGH LEVEL ASU REVIEWS, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEE MEETINGS, ARAB SOCIALIST UNION HEAD HAFIZ GHANIM FINALLY ANNOUNCED FEB 4 THAT PRESIDENT SADAT WILL APPOINT A COMMITTEE COMPRISING PEOPLES ASSEMBLY SPEAKER MAR'I, PRIMIN HEGAZI, AND DR. GHANIM TOCOORDINATE ACTIVITY OF STATE INSTITUTIONS UNTIL A "HIGHER EXECUTIVE COUNCIL" IS APPOINTED AS PRART OF NEW NASU DEVELOPMENT.

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2. UNDER NEW DEVELOPMENT MEASURES, DR. GHANIM ADDED, ASU MEMBERSHIP WILL BE OPTIONAL AND WILL NOT RPT NOT BE COMPULSORY FOR CANDIDATURE FOR PEOPLES ASSEMBLY OR APPOINTMENT TO SENIOR POSITIONS. ELECTED ASSEMBLY MEMBERS WILL, HOWEVER, BE REQUIRED TO JOIN THE ASU.

3. DR. GHANIM ANNOUNCED THAT SINCE PRESS IS NATIONAL INDEPENDENT AUTHORITY, A "HIGHER PRESS COUNCIL" WILL BE FORMED. ASU WILL OWN 51 PERCENT OF ASSETS OF PRESS INSTITUTIONS WITH EMPLOYEES HOLDING REMAINING 49PERCENT. ASU WILL NOT CONSIDER PRESS AS SOURCE OF REVENUE AND WILL NOT "SHARE DIVIDENDS". NEW PRESS COUNCIL WILL NOT DRAW MOST OF MEMBERSHIP FROM JOURNALISTS, WITH ADDITIONAL REPS FROM "THE POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS" (I.E., ASU), PEOPLES ASSEMBLY, AND EXTANT PRESS SYNDICATE. COUNCIL WILL PLAN AND EXECUTE CODE OF ETHICS FOR PRESS TO SECURE FREEDOM WITHOUT HARMING PUBLIC INTEREST. COUNCIL WILL ALSO ISSUE NEW LICENSES FOR NEWSPAPERS AND COORDINATE BETWEEN PRESS AND GOE INFORMATION MEDIA.

4. IN GENERAL, DR. GHANIM STRESSED THE ASU MUST INCORPORATE METHODS WHICH WILL MAKE IT MORE DYNMAIC AND DEMOCRATIC. PEOPLE THEMSELVES WILL CHOOSE "FORM, NUMBER AND METHODS OF ACTION" WITHIN ASU: FINAL GOE DECISIONS WILL BE SPELLED OUT IN NEW ASU STATUTE TO BE PREPARED BY PRESIDENT SADAT BEFORE JULY 23. AFTER THAT DATE, ALL ELECTIVE OFFICES WITHIN ASU WILL BE VACATED AND NEW ELECTIONS HELD, INCLUDING ELECTIONS FOR HIGHER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. (LATTER HAS EXISTED ONLY ONCE IN ASU HISTORY, AND WAS DISSOLVED AFTER SADAT'S MAY 1971 "CORRECTIVE MOVEMENT" BECAUSE IT SIDED WITH ALI SABRI AND CO.)

4. COMMENT: PRESS REPRESENTATIVES TO WHOM WE HAVE TALKED RECENTLY ARE NOT HAPPY WITH NEW PRESS COUNCIL WHICH THEY FIND CUMBERSOME METHOD OF SELF-CENSORSHIP, AND FEAR WILL BE DOMINATED BY GOE. ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING HELD SOME WEEKS AGO WAS CALLED, INEXPLICABLY IN VIEW OF AHRAH MANAGING EDITOR, BY SPEAKER PEOPLES ASSEMBLY MAR'I, WHO IS OBVIOUSLY GOING TO KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH TRADITIONALLY STICKY QUESTION OF PRESS "SELF-DISCIPLINE".

5. ALTHOUGH GOE HAS NOW ANNOUNCED FORMALLY THAT NEXT STAGE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION WILL INVOLVE REORGANIZATION OF ASU AND NOT REINTRODUCTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES, MANY PARLIAMENTARIANS AND PUBLIC FIGURES BELIEVE THAT POLITICAL PRITIES ARE NOT TOTALLY RULED OUT, EXCEPT IN NEAR FUTURE. NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE DISAPPOINTMENT THAT ASU, ALREADY OFFICIALLY DESCRIBED AS "ALLIANCE OF WORKING PEOPLES" AND THEREFORE ON PAPER A DEMOCRATIC FORUM, IS TO CONTINUE AS IN PAST WITH THE ADDITION OF THE FEW MEASURES NOTED ABOVE. NOBODY TAKES

SERIOUSLY THE IDEA THAT LEADING POSITIONS IN PUBLIC SECTOR
ORGANIZATIONS AND IN GOE ARE LIKELY TO BE FILLED BY NON-ASU
MEMBERS, AND WE CERTAINLY DO NOT EXPECT RESIGNATION FROM ASU
BY SENIOR OFFICIALS WHO ADVOCATED POLITICAL PARTIES.
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